HOWARD: When you reflect on Menzies' career, what are the things that really stand out to you apart from his obvious political success in winning seven elections and creating the Liberal Party? What are the things that you think Menzies is
rightly remembered for as distinct from what he occasionally is remembered for?

TURNBULL: He's remembered as much for his oratory and his love of language and his use of language. He had a certain style about him. He loved the English language with a passion. Now that's something he had very much in common with Churchill and very much in common, if I may say so, with you. You know, you've slipped into the authorship, role of author with, you know, with great skill and enthusiasm. So he was - I think that's important, very important because I think somebody - that politicians should be good communicators, but it's good that they love it, that they love the language in which they're speaking and Menzies loved it. He loved being up there, he loved using, you know, new words, he loved experimenting with the pace and delivery of his speeches.

You know, I've paid a lot of attention to the way he used to prepare for speeches and, you know, speak - give well - like Churchill did, the best prepared off-the-cuff speeches you
could imagine. And that's the key, that's the gold standard. But in terms of substantive achievements, well, Australia's universities, our alliance with the United States, post-war alliance, he was the one, the great imperialist though he was, the great monarchist though he was, this is a man that stood in the House of Representatives as, you know, in the 1950s and said, you know, the Queen is Queen of Australia not by right of any law of the United - of Australia but because she represents, you know, the Britishness that we have - we all have in common. I mean he saw Australia as part of a greater Britain. He once said the boundaries of Britain do not lie on the Kentish coast but at Invercargill and Cape York. So he had a view of Australia as part of Britain that would be quite odd today. Yet notwithstanding that, he recognised the changed political realities, he entered into the ANZUS treaty and he looked to - his relationship to the United States was not one of a - it was not subservient, it was very much as a one nation speaking to another, so it was not a relationship of the dominion - he wasn't finding a new empire of which to be a dominion.
HOWARD: A good way of putting it.

TURNBULL: He saw it as was a relationship between two nations of the new world, obviously one larger than more potent than the other, but nonetheless equals in dignity if not equals in power and that, I think, is - that's the tenor he set. And then, of course, the way in which he re-established the relations with Japan, you know, in 1957.

HOWARD: That's a great achievement, the commerce agreement.

TURNBULL: Incredible. Yeah, I mean, this is only 12 years after the end of the war and the brutality, the cruelty of the Japanese to Australians, particularly Australian prisoners of war. It's still very real, that memory is still very real today. How real was it when those veterans, those who had survived, were still …were still in their 30s and early 40s?

HOWARD: And many of them were in Federal Parliament.
TURNBULL: Yes.

HOWARD: People like Reg Schwartz and on the other side of politics, Tom Uren. They were members of parliament. They had been prisoners of war.

TURNBULL: Yeah.

HOWARD: Do you think that that whole episode with the commerce agreement is a bit of a metaphor for seeming reality to me that the Menzies legacy fell into discard for a long time and it's perhaps only in more recent years that the Liberal side of politics is trying to recall what he did and to put into different context the achievements of his period?

TURNBULL: I think that's a fair point. You're a much keener student of him and his period than I have been. I think the other thing about him, which is very important, is that he was a very confident leader of Australia. He had no - he had a natural confidence about him. He wasn't - he wasn't chippy, you know, without identifying other politicians, he didn't
have - he was completely relaxed about Australia's status in the world. He was a very fervent royalist but he was not a groveler. I mean, he saw, he was held up by his critics as being overly deferential to the Queen you know, you know I did but see her passing by. But he was not a little Englander.

The thing about Menzies that is, I think, really - in my study of the development of Australia's national identity, is that he'd saw - he did not see there being any contradiction between Australia and British identity. You wouldn't say this today but this was his view. So he saw himself as an Australian born in Jeparit as much an inheritor of the common law, the Westminster tradition, the royal family and all of that, the House of Commons, he saw himself as much an inheritor of that as anyone that was born in the - within the borders of the United Kingdom and I think that's a very - it's a very important insight because people look at Menzies today mistakenly in an anachronistic way and they say gosh, look at all those thing he said about Britain, how out of touch, unreal that was.
Well they'd be unusual to say today but Menzies wouldn't be saying them today. Menzies was fundamentally a man of his own time and if he was, you know, if he was in public life in 2015 he would be talking about the realities of 2015 not the realities of 1955.

HOWARD: When you were elected leader of the Liberal Party back in September, both you and Julie Bishop's first press conference invoked Menzies, which is very understandable. But to me it was very understandable. He founded our party. Why did you do that?

TURNBULL: Well, I invoked Menzies because, not simply because was the founder of the party, in fact that's the least important reason. The real reason for invoking Menzies is that he represented that leadership, that steady, conservative with a small C, responsible leadership that brings together both the small L liberal traditions and, if you like, the large C Conservative traditions, brings it together into a united party.

I mean that's what he did but he understood. Menzies
was - he was conservative by instinct, I would say, this is my judgment, I'd like to know your view, you know much more about it. I would say Menzies was conservative by instinct but liberal with a small L by philosophy. And he combined those in himself, as I think many of us do, but he had - and he also had - he had a generous vision. You know, he took on plenty of big fights, as all politicians have to, but he didn't - he doesn't come across to me, looking at it as someone reading the history, as a person who was a hater or who sought conflict where it wasn't, you know, where it wasn't required. He didn't seek conflict for its own sake and I, you know, I think his style of leadership is one that I have no doubt - well I'm sure that you channelled and I try to channel your style of leadership too.

HOWARD: Well anybody who is successful, as successful as he is on our side of politics would be foolish not to learn by that example. I think one of the interesting things, picking up on your point, is that a lot of the language we now use to classify people was probably not used when Menzies was prime minister. Because Menzies, when you think about it,
when it came to economic policy was, according to my definition, very conservative. I don't regard myself as an economic conservative. Anybody who argued for significant change is hardly an economic conservative. But everybody was against big change in those years. It's one of the interesting things in the Menzies period. They all supported a rigid industrial relations system, they were in favour of a fixed exchange rate, they were in favour of tariffs, they certainly wouldn't entertain having foreign banks, all of those sorts - and the tax system remained in a fairly rigid state.

TURNBULL: So what do you think, John, what did you learn as prime minister from Menzies and what do you think Menzies teaches us today?

HOWARD: Well I think one of the things I learnt was the importance of the Coalition. I've said that in both the books I've written. I think he understood from his earlier experiences because the Coalition difficulties presented until he came back in '49. I think that was important.
The other thing I learned very much from him was the importance of following the rules as far as cabinet, government and the parliamentary system were concerned. I was struck by all the former members and ministers who worked with him, they all said to me that he was very respectful towards the cabinet and the party room and the idea that he just game to come along and tell the chaps what was going to happen was complete nonsense, that he did. He would stay to the end.

I remember Jim Forbes telling me that he would stay to the end of any party meeting. And those sort of things, I guess, the modalities of handling a political party after you've had difficulty with it in your earlier iterations is something I did learn from Menzies and I think it's some experience that any leader of our party should -

TURNBULL: You learnt from Menzies and I've learned from you because I didn't see - I didn't see Menzies in action. I suppose you didn't in the Parliament.
HOWARD: No, I didn't, there was an 8-year gap. Menzies left in the beginning of 1966 and I arrived May '74. There was an 8-year gap. I only met him once but I knew so many of the - people like Fraser and Anthony and Nixon and Sinclair and Jim Forbes. They had all been in Parliament and in the case of a few of them. I think one, Doug Anthony, had been in the ministry. Fraser didn't enter the ministry until after Menzies went but he - they all talked to me about Menzies.

TURNBULL: How did Menzies' style in the House differ from - or how would you characterise it?

HOWARD: The big difference was conditioned by the absence of television. Television has altered the theatrics of Parliament enormously and I was there pre-television and I was there post-television and I think it has made an enormous impact. One of the big things it does is that it distorts - it divides the impact on those in the House with those out there. Sometimes I found myself thinking I'd done very well in the House being reprimanded by somebody in my family saying
"Dad, that looked awful." So it's an interesting thing to remember.

TURNBULL: Menzies' style, would it have been more suited to television than perhaps some of the theatrics we get in the House today? Cos I agree with you, I think some of the - I think, with great respect to Paul Keating, I think some of his really savage attacks in the House, which excited the press gallery and excited everyone in the House, were just absolutely diabolical.

HOWARD: They hurt him politically.

TURNBULL: Hurt him politically, absolutely.

HOWARD: My view is that Menzies would have performed well in the era of television of Parliament. I thought Menzies was very good on television. He literally and metaphorically filled the screen and I can remember him sort of staring down the camera in 1963, the year that Tom was elected, saying "Labor's not fit to govern" and he said it with such
marvellous emphasis so I think he would have adapted.

But I think the advice to which you referred is good advice. One of the things I learnt from Menzies was the virtue of a very brief response. If somebody asked you a long, complicated question, there was no better answer often than to say I've taken careful note of that and I'll come back to you. Who could complain? Or I agree with you or something - short answers, very, very short answers, less than 5 seconds can be very effective and that is something that I remember listening to Parliament as a young person, I remember about Menzies.